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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Air Quality Alert Extended Through Tuesday Ozone Pollution Levels Expected to Remain Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups

(COLUMBUS, August 30, 2010) –The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is extending the Air Quality Alert through Tuesday, August 31. The region – Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Knox, Licking, and Madison counties – is likely to experience ozone pollution levels that are Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups on the [national Air Quality Index \(AQI\) scale](#). Monday and Tuesday's forecast is 111 AQI. Monday marks the 11th Air Quality Alert of the year, and Tuesday brings the total Alerts to 12.

Ozone pollution is a colorless, odorless gas produced when emissions from our cars, lawn equipment and industry react together in the presence of sunlight. Sunny skies, light winds, and temperatures in the low 90's will enhance ozone formation, limit the dispersion of pollutants, and result in air pollution levels that are considered to be unhealthy for sensitive groups. MORPC will continue monitoring the conditions to determine if Wednesday's levels will remain high, which could extend the Air Quality Alert episode.

MORPC uses the national AQI scale to inform the public about daily ozone and particle pollution levels in central Ohio. The AQI scale runs from 0 to 300—the higher the AQI value, the greater the health concern. When levels reach above 100, air quality is considered to be Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups, which includes people with respiratory and heart disease, children and older adults. MORPC issues an Air Quality Alert to the public when pollution levels reach 101 or higher.

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People with asthma are more likely to suffer an increase in the number and severity of symptoms during an Air Quality Alert. To decrease the potential for health implications, sensitive groups are urged to limit prolonged outdoor exertion. Everyone can reduce their exposure to air pollution by saving strenuous outdoor activities for the evening or morning, when pollution levels are generally lower. People who are experiencing breathing difficulties should consult with their doctor. More information on the health effects of ozone pollution is available at:

www.franklincountyohio.gov/health/airpollution.htm and www.publichealth.columbus.gov.

You can sign-up online to receive Air Quality Alert notifications delivered straight to your inbox. Visit <http://airquality.morpc.org> and click on the EnviroFlash logo to start receiving these free notifications. You can also call MORPC's toll-free air quality hotline at 1-888-666-1009 to listen to the latest forecast to help plan your days accordingly to reduce your exposure to air pollution.

MORPC recommends taking the following actions to help reduce air pollution:

- **Reduce driving and consider using COTA, carpooling, biking or walking to your destinations by contacting RideSolutions at (888) 742-RIDE.** Cars and trucks are major contributors to air pollution in the region.
- **Turn off your engine instead of idling your vehicle to cut down on vehicle emissions that contribute to ground-level ozone pollution.** You will save gas and prevent pollution by turning the engine off and restarting it again if you expect to idle for more than 30 seconds. Next time, consider parking your car and going into the bank or restaurant.
- **Refuel your vehicle after 6 p.m.** Filling up your tank when the direct sunlight and heat have diminished helps reduce ground-level ozone pollution
- **Avoid topping off your tank at the gas station.** Spilled gasoline pollutes the air when it evaporates.
- **Consider mowing your lawn on a day when there is not an Air Quality Alert.** Longer grass in your yard is good for the air, as well as the lawn.
- **Combine your errands into one trip.** Trip chaining saves gas and vehicle wear and tear.

Designated as central Ohio's metropolitan planning agency, MORPC is a voluntary association of 47 local governments. The Center for Energy & Environment at MORPC serves as a community resource in the region by offering a variety of services including: daily air quality forecasts, trail coordination, educational presentations, watershed planning, home weatherization, government carbon footprint analysis and more.